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SOURCE Chemie-Ingenieur-Technik, No 17, 1950.

NEW INDUSTRIAL CENTERS IN THE SOVIET ARCTIC REGIONS

The Soviet Arctic regions have been greatly developed and could become a self-sufficient industrial base in the event of another war. In 1946, the Soviet Arctic North had 2 million inhabitants, including 300,000 industrial workers.

White Sea Area

In this area, apatite deposits of an estimated 2-billion-ton capacity had already been discovered in 1921 in the Khibinskaya Tundra, near the Murmansk railroad line. Other large reserves of apatite are located further to the west, in the Monche Tundra. The apatite, occurring with nepheline, contains 30-35 percent of P_2O_5 , and a concentrate of 38-40 percent is obtained by magnetic and flotation processes. Part of the concentrate is processed near the deposits, while another part is shipped to the superphosphate plants in other parts of the USSR or is exported. The new chemical plant in Kirovsk and others on the Kola Peninsula process mainly apatite and produce elementary phosphorus, phosphoric acid, superphosphate, other phosphorus compounds, and mixed fertilizers.

The nepheline, obtained in yields up to 50 percent, serves as raw material for the aluminum industry on the Volkhov River and in Karelia as well as for the sodium- and potassium-compounds plants. The titanium content of the apatite is obtained in the form of concentrates. The 1939 output of 2.3 million tons of apatite has been exceeded at present.

Nickel ore, the second most important raw material of the Kola Peninsula, is found in the Monche Tundra, near the northwestern branch of Lake Imandra. It is estimated that the copper- and cobalt-bearing ore reserves, containing 0.2-0.5 percent of nickel, amount to 80,000 tons. Additional rich ores with up to 5 percent of nickel have been discovered in the Nittis-Kumuzh'ya Mountains. The first section of the Nickel Combine in Monchegorsk started operation in 1940 and was to produce 5,000 tons of nickel per year by mining equal amounts of copper and cobalt ores; however, since then this capacity has been doubled.

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The nickel deposits of the Petsamo region, which the USSR obtained through the peace treaty with Finland, are estimated to contain 5 million tons of ore with a nickel content of 1-3 percent. The Soviet government paid 20 million dollars to the International Nickel Company of Canada for a nickel-smelting plant with a reported capacity of 10,000 tons.

The exploitation of the following minerals has been started or planned: pyrrhotine, magnetic pyrites, niobium, tantalum, zirconium, cerium, molybdenum, and precious metals. As for fuel, the supply of peat near the Murmansk Railroad Line and further to the east is estimated at 160 million tons (air-dried). The Mezen' Combine, built at the mouth of the Mezen' River, chiefly manufactures machinery and motors for this region.

Pechora Basin

The activities of the second largest industrial center above the Arctic Circle, the so-called "Arctic Ruhr," are based on the raw materials of the Bol'shezemel'skaya Tundra. Its high-grade coal deposits are estimated at 50 billion tons, of which one third consists of coking coal. In 1940 the Soviets operated two mines with yearly capacities of 350,000 and 750,000 tons; three more, each with a capacity of 350,000 tons, are under construction. These coal mines supply local metallurgical plants which process ores from the Urals or Pechora Basin and are also intended to serve Leningrad and Murmansk industries. During World War II, a branch line, approximately 1,000 kilometers long, was laid from Ukhta to Kotlas and was later extended to Vorkuta.

Lignite deposits which are located further to the south are also being exploited. In addition, large oil shale deposits have been discovered in the northern part of the Pechora Basin, of which the Ukhta deposits alone are estimated at several billions of tons. High-grade asphaltite is being mined at the upper course of the Izhma River.

Of great importance are the petroleum deposits at the Ukhta River, with reserves of about 50 billion tons. Today, the city of Ukhta has a modern refinery connected with an electric power plant. It is believed that the production of petroleum has already reached 100,000 tons. Natural gas deposits, supposedly the most important natural gas deposits of the USSR, were discovered near the Ukhta River in 1935; in addition, chromium and manganese ores, as well as other minerals, have been found.

Siberian Arctic

Further to the east, at the mouth of the Yenisey River, another industrial center has been developing. Rich coal deposits are located near the new port of Dudinka, and evidences of petroleum and natural gas have also been discovered. Drilling up to a depth of 2,000 meters has been carried out. Copper-bearing ores with 0.3-0.9 percent of nickel and an estimated nickel content of 90,000 tons are located on the lower Yenisey River and their exploitation had already begun in 1938.

Fluorspar was discovered on the Yugorskiy Peninsula, near the Anderma River. Three of the seven known ore seams contain 2 million tons of almost pure CaF_2 and their exploitation is being facilitated by mechanized mining, a 3,000-kilowatt power plant, and a concentrating installation. Petroleum has been found on Novaya Zemlya Island.

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East of the mouth of the Yenisey, in the southern part of the Taimyr Peninsula, a nickel combine with a yearly capacity of 10,000 tons of nickel and an associated copper output was erected in Noril'sk. This combine exploits ore deposits having a nickel content of from one to more than 4 percent and containing an estimated 160,000 tons of nickel. At present Noril'sk is connected with the port of Dudinka by an 80-kilometer-long railroad line.

Still further to the east, at Sangar on the Lena River, coal mining has been started and petroleum has been discovered.

Tin ores occur from the mouth of the Kolyma River to the Chukot Peninsula; the resultant tin concentrate is processed in Moscow. It is not known how far the planned tin combine has progressed. The Chukot Peninsula also has rich coal fields, of which the fields at the Anadyr River are now the most widely exploited.

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